

Embark Richmond Highway: Richmond Highway Multimodal Study County Staff /Advisory Group Roles and Responsibilities

BACKGROUND

On May 12, 2015, the Board of Supervisors (Board):

- 1) Endorsed the recommendations for multimodal (roadway, bicycle/pedestrian and transit) improvements of “Alternative 4 BRT/Metrorail Hybrid,” for implementation contingent upon supportive land use and an achievable funding plan, as contained in the resolution adopted by the Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis Executive Steering Committee in October 2014 (Attachment I);
- 2) Authorized an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan to assess and refine the recommendations of the Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis for the corridor from Huntington to Accotink Village, Fort Belvoir. The Plan amendment is to consider:
 - a. land use density and mix for the areas within a ½ mile radius of proposed stations in the corridor from Huntington to Accotink Village, Fort Belvoir; corridor-wide transportation including transit, pedestrian and bicycle systems; urban design, public facilities, and other elements supportive of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).
 - b. policy guidance in support of the future extension of Metrorail from the Huntington Metrorail Station to the Hybla Valley Community Business Center including broad Comprehensive Plan language that supports Metrorail in terms of urban design and grid of streets, and anticipates future planning for Metrorail stations; and,
- 3) Directed staff to proceed with actions necessary to conduct an EA for BRT, and the associated road widening of Richmond Highway, from the Huntington Metrorail Station to Accotink Village, in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and other appropriate entities; and to initiate design for the road improvement and BRT projects.

Over the years, numerous planning and transportation studies have been completed for the Richmond Highway corridor. The two foundational transportation studies for this current multimodal effort were the VDOT Route 1 Centerline Study (1998) and the DRPT Route 1 Transit Study (2010). The Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis builds on these prior studies, addresses multiple transportation modes and provides a clear path forward to improve mobility and enhance development in the corridor. The study was led by DRPT in collaboration with Fairfax County, Prince William County, VDOT and the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment. The study began

in June 2013, and was completed in January 2015. Considerable public involvement occurred during the course of the study, including public meetings held in October 2013, March 2014, and October 2014.

A range of alternatives were evaluated for transit, vehicular, and bicycle and pedestrian modes. For each alternative, three travel lanes per direction on Richmond Highway and a continuous facility for bicycles and pedestrians were recommended. The executive summary of the study is available at <http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/media/1556/route-1-executive-brief-february-2015.pdf> and the full report is available online at <http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/media/1591/route-1-final-report-with-appendices-february-2015.pdf>

At the conclusion of the study, the project team recommended that “Alternative 4”, which included an extension of the Metrorail Yellow Line to Hybla Valley with supporting BRT to Woodbridge, be advanced in a phased approach. Due to the scale of the project, it is necessary to implement the recommended alternative in phases. As described in the DRPT study, Phase I encompasses BRT from the Huntington Metrorail Station to Hybla Valley; Phase II extends BRT from Hybla Valley to Fort Belvoir; Phase III extends BRT from Fort Belvoir to Woodbridge; and Phase IV is the extension of Metrorail from the Huntington Metrorail Station to Hybla Valley.

The study results show that Phases I and II are currently potentially competitive for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts funding. Phase III will not be competitive for such funding for a number of years, and Phase IV will require significant population and employment growth to be competitive for New Starts funding. In October 2014, the Executive Steering Committee for the Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis, approved a resolution in support of Alternative 4.

In addition, Richmond Highway is currently being widened from four lanes to its ultimate six-lane section from Telegraph Road to Mount Vernon Highway (Route 235). The project includes a multiuse trail, pedestrian sidewalk, on-road bicycle accommodations and provision of a median for future transit. The next segment of Richmond Highway scheduled for improvement is the segment immediately to the north, from Route 235 to Napper Road. Staff has been working to initiate environmental documentation and conceptual design for this section of Route 1. The project would also include pedestrian and bicycle facilities and provision of a median for future transit. The remainder of the Richmond Highway Corridor does not require widening except as may be needed to accommodate a center median transitway.

An EA is required for both the Route 1 widening project from Route 235 to Napper Road and for the BRT project. With the endorsement of the BRT recommendation, it is important that all aspects of the road improvement project move forward in a manner that supports the schedule for the BRT project. Staff in consultation with VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is proposing to conduct two separate EAs. The EA for the widening project will precede and feed into the EA for the BRT project.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval of the proposed EA approaches is required.

With respect to the Comprehensive Plan, key elements to be developed are: policy guidance supportive of BRT and the study of future rail; goals and objectives supportive of a multimodal environment; station templates and locations; right-of-way and streetscape widths; refined land uses and mix in station areas; and, urban design guidelines.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As set forth above, considerable efforts and public engagement have already occurred related to both the Richmond Highway Alternatives Analysis study and the widening of Richmond Highway. The May 12, 2015, directives of the Board are based upon and are intended to advance those efforts.

The approach that will be used to accomplish those tasks includes a joint effort by the staff and an Advisory Group consisting of representatives of the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation (SFDC) and members of the community appointed by Supervisors Hyland and McKay. The Advisory Group will augment, but not take the place of established groups such as the Lee District Land Use Committee and the Mt. Vernon Council.

The staff will:

- Be responsible for the logistical aspects of the staff/Advisory Group meetings including securing meeting space (the SFDC office or South County Center preferred locations), sending meeting invites, producing agendas, taking notes and producing summary minutes for the Advisory Group and the Planning Commission, maintaining records, and maintaining a website and social media presence;
- Lead the Advisory Group Meetings;
- Conduct the technical work necessary and produce alternative concepts, plans, etc. for the various components of the process based on the recommendations of the Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis Executive Steering Committee;
- Present the technical work to the Advisory Group for discussion and consider input received from the group;
- Serve as a resource to answer technical questions relevant to the effort and/or general planning-related questions;
- Conduct additional public outreach sessions, such as open houses for the general public, as appropriate during the various phases of the effort to receive additional feedback;
- Coordinate the technical work with public agency partners, including VDOT, FHWA and FTA;
- Coordinate with VDOT on public outreach and public hearings associated with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process;

- Develop refined recommendations following discussions with the Advisory Group; and,
- Prepare the Environmental Assessments as well as a Comprehensive Plan Amendment based on the recommendations of Executive Steering Committee.

The Advisory Group will:

- Appoint a member to function as a liaison between staff and the Advisory Group;
- Provide specific local and/or subject area expertise and seek to understand and speak for community interests;
- Act as a sounding board for the staff and advise the staff on potential community concerns;
- Relay information to and solicit broader based input from stakeholders in the affected communities, particularly when the members represent a certain homeowners/community association or other organization;
- Provide input on the pros and cons of technical work presented by the staff including alternatives and assist in the development of the “best” solutions;
- Assist in developing a public outreach plan and collectively communicating information on the outreach activities to the public; and,
- Attend and participate in public outreach activities.

TIME COMMITMENT

It is envisioned that the Environmental Assessments and Comprehensive Plan amendment will take approximately 48 months to complete. While it is not possible to anticipate an exact meeting schedule for the Advisory Group, it is likely that the Advisory Group will meet periodically as necessitated by the development of draft products and for periodic progress reports/updates for the duration of the process. It is further anticipated that there would be no more than one Advisory Group meeting per month and that the meetings will occur at a location on or proximate to Richmond Highway, such as the offices of the SFDC or at the South County Center. Meeting times will be established by the Advisory Group in consultation with staff and may alternate between morning and evening meetings.

Attachments:

Attachment I: Resolution adopted by the Route 1 Multimodal Alternatives Analysis Executive Steering Committee in October 2014